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SUBJECT: THE U.S.-ISRAEL JOINT POLITICAL MILITARY GROUP  
(JPMG)

Classified By: PM Acting A/S Stephen D. Mull, Reasons 1.4(b)(d)

Summary:

[¶1.](#) (C) The thirty-ninth meeting, and first in two years, of the U.S.-Israel Joint Political Military Group (JPMG) took place in Washington on March 20, 2008. Co-chairmen were Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs Stephen D. Mull and Israeli Ministry of Defense (MOD) Director General Pinchas Buchris. Topics included a Regional Security Update, Pakistan and Russia Security Issues, Iraq and Afghanistan Security Issues, Israel Export Control Changes and Technology Strategic Overview, Iraq Security Update, Regional Security Analysis, Prospective Middle East Arms Transfers, Cluster Munitions, Missile and Rocket Defense, and Joint Security Assistance Planning. End Summary.

Regional Security:

[¶2.](#) (S) MOD Pol-Mil Director Amos Gilad delivered Israel's detailed presentation on regional security, covering (specific details below) Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iran, and touching on other Middle East countries. NEA DAS Robert Danin provided the U.S. response.

Palestine:

[¶3.](#) (S) On Palestine, Gilad said that the Palestinian Authority (PA) was committed to a two-state solution, and that the GOI was working with Abu Mazen and Abu Alaa, as well as with the "three generals" (Dayton, Jones, and Fraser) to meet Roadmap obligations. He said Israel was supporting the development of the Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF) and mentioned that Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak has been personally involved. However, the PA had lost Gaza, he said, and now Israel's "mood is changing quickly." The rocket attacks emanating from Gaza are intolerable, and "if no solution is found, we will find one," he said, implying a military solution. He claimed that Hamas has 1000 Grad rockets that have come from Lebanon, through Egypt, and into Gaza.

[¶4.](#) (S) Danin replied that the U.S. remained committed to the President's June 24, 2002 vision of peace, which the GOI endorsed. The U.S. is actively engaged in Palestinian security efforts, which, in our estimation, underscored Israel's security. He lauded Israel's support for the PASF and stressed the need for Israel to facilitate their movement and access in order to enable their success.

Lebanon:

[¶5.](#) (S) On Lebanon, Gilad delivered a harsh assessment: "(United Nations Security Council Resolution) 1701 is an empty suit! 'Hizballah-stan' has 42,000 rockets (there are no borders between Syria and Lebanon)." Gilad said that Lebanon "did not really exist;" Syria did not recognize it, at any rate, and Israel considered "Syria and Hizballah-stan

as one unit, together with the IRGC," referring to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps. He warned that this was no longer just a terrorist entity, but a military entity, complete with rockets from the Syrian army. "Lebanon is a weak republic," he said, and the Government of Lebanon (GOL), he noted, existed on paper only. Syria was trying to take over all of Lebanon, either through political assassinations or payoffs.

¶6. (S) Danin noted that the U.S. had a different view, and took exception to the idea of UNSCR 1701 as an "empty suit." Danin said that 1701 had brought an end to the 2006 war in Lebanon, and had brought about improvements on the ground, such as the deployment of the Lebanese Army throughout the country. He agreed that 1701 was not being fulfilled, but stated our commitment to work with UNIFIL, whose performance south in Lebanon, in conjunction with the Lebanese Armed Forces, had improved over previous years. Danin also noted that Gilad had now identified Syria as the main culprit in Lebanon, whereas in 2006 Israel went out of its way during the war to assure Syria of no hostile intent. Danin said the U.S. was appreciative of Siniora's fortitude - that the GOL was not a government on paper only. It had withstood multiple challenges from challengers such as Hizballah. Still, Lebanon was paralyzed, and the U.S. shared Israel's assessment that Syria was attempting to take it back. The U.S. was trying to strengthen the GOL and create space for it to solve its problems. But we counted on international support. Danin

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said that there is no tradeoff between democracy and stability, and that "democracy is not something we do to countries, but rather something we do with countries."

Syria:

¶7. (S) Gilad's remarks on Syria, aside from those regarding its involvement in Lebanese affairs, included several conciliatory elements. He said that, despite Bashar al Assad's violent nature, the Syrian President was committed to the peace option. Danin countered that the U.S. had a harder line than Israel. Syria, he said, was entrenched in a battle to preserve its regime, to resist the tribunal in New York, and to seek hegemony over Lebanon. He said that Syria wanted the peace "process" with Israel in order to break out of isolation, but said we were not convinced that Syria wants to conclude the deal.

Egypt:

¶8. (S) Gilad said Israel's assessment of Egypt is bipolar. On the one hand, Israel sees the strategic peace with Egypt as vitally important. On the other, it views Egypt as problematic. Gilad shared his belief that the Government of Egypt (GOE) is on tenuous footing. Democratic elections in Egypt would result in a victory for the Muslim Brotherhood, so the regime must guard its stability. But it cannot push the envelope too far, and that has created problems for Israel along the Egypt-Gaza border. He said Egypt will always act to interdict an act of terror near Eilat, but is unwilling to stop the flow of weapons and Hamas operatives across the border with Gaza. Gilad believed this was the GOE's way of keeping Hamas from focusing its contrition on Egypt. Finally, he mentioned that Egypt's army posed a threat to Israel's qualitative military edge. (COMMENT: Gilad may have been laying a marker against increased future FMF levels for Egypt. Egypt's FMF stayed constant at \$1.3 billion for FY09, while Israel's increased to \$2.55 billion as part of the new, ten-year, \$30 billion FMF memorandum of understanding beginning in FY09. END COMMENT.)

¶9. (S) Danin noted that Egypt is trying to advance a process for solving the Gaza border crisis. He said that unfortunately Israel and Egypt do not have a shared view of what should be done with Gaza, and the problems were derivative of that. He was encouraged by Gilad's frequent

trips to Egypt, saying "you need to engage." The U.S. has offered to help, but our offer has not been accepted to date.

Danin assured Gilad that our offer nonetheless remained on the table.

Iran:

¶10. (S) On Iran, Gilad said Israel is confident that Tehran remains determined to proceed with its nuclear plan. It is not frozen, as the USG's National Intelligence Estimate claimed, and -- as evidenced by the elections the previous week -- the conservatives in Iran are getting stronger. Danin said that the U.S. shared Israel's concern, and for that reason we were keeping pressure on Iran both unilaterally and with the international community through such efforts as new UNSC and other sanctions.

Middle East:

¶11. (S) Continuing his whirlwind tour of the rest of the region, Gilad expressed great respect for Jordan: "state of the art in intelligence, with a loyal army, protecting against al Qaeda." He praised King Abdullah for enforcing his borders. Gilad had less positive remarks on Saudi Arabia, which he claimed was "keeping a nuclear option" and had a stockpile of missiles from China. He believed the U.S. was not fully aware of Israel's strong, sophisticated strategic relationship with Turkey. On Iraq, Gilad said that post-Saddam Iraq no longer posed a strategic threat to Israel. His summation consisted of the good news that Israel still enjoyed a relatively convenient strategic environment. Iran was not yet nuclear, Israel had peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, and Libya and Syria appeared to have given up their nuclear ambitions. For these reasons, Gilad said Israel still had an opportunity to contribute to a better future for the Middle East, with the help of the U.S. But he warned that we were both running out of time.

Pakistan, Russia:

¶12. (S) The U.S. delegation gave presentations on U.S. policy in Pakistan, Russia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Pakistan/Bangladesh Office Director Richard Sacks provided a briefing on our growing engagement with Pakistan, including counterterrorism cooperation and arms sales. Russia Office

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Director Ian Kelly reviewed how Russia was not going in a good direction. The USG was most concerned with the recentralization of authority in Putin, and remained skeptical that Medvedev will be able to exert influence as president over PM Putin when all the latter's loyalists would still see Putin in such a visible role. The USG continued to monitor Russia's military spending, which has quadrupled since 2001 but still remains a low two-percent of Russia's GDP. Kelly added that Russia's ties with Iran go back to the early 1990s, and that the U.S. did not oppose civilian nuclear cooperation - not least because it strengthens the USG argument that Iran does not need its own enrichment program. The USG was still concerned, however, over Russian arms sales to Iran, including the SA-15 and potentially S300 missiles, which would significantly upgrade Iran's air defense posture.

Afghanistan, Iraq:

¶13. (S) Afghan Office Deputy Director Timothy Wilder reviewed the "many successes, but not success" that we have had in Afghanistan. He noted progress on reconstruction, security, democracy, and governance that have separated the people from the enemy and helped connect them with their government. He said that a donors' conference in June will hopefully lead to new pledges for Afghanistan. DAS/D Mark Kimmitt and NEA DAS Larry Butler provided a joint presentation on Iraq. Kimmitt reviewed the "surge" progress and General Petraeus' desire not to prejudice the outcome or commit too early to a troop withdrawal. Kimmitt also spoke about the long-term U.S.-Iraqi strategic relationship, including ongoing negotiations over a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). A/SD

Mary Beth Long characterized the SOFA as the natural institutionalization of a permanent military-military relationship with Iraq that will require some form of U.S. presence. Butler spoke about Iraq's progress on some of the 18 benchmarks, including the debaathification law, provincial powers law, the budget, and the amnesty law.

#### Export Control Reform/Technology Sharing:

¶14. (S) Eli Pincu and Danyshai Korenblot led the GOI presentation on Export Control Reform and Technology Sharing. Pincu noted that the Israeli Defense Export Control Act and associated regulations took effect on December 31, 2007. The new law was passed in fulfillment of a mandate contained in the Statement of Understanding (SOU) signed by SecDef and his GOI counterpart in August 2005. Mull noted Israel's significant strides in establishing a viable export control process, principally in response to technology diversions to China, but remarked that more work is necessary to successfully implement the regulations. Mull noted that State will continue to watch with interest as Israel's commitment to implementation is demonstrated by the level of resources it allocates to the Defense Export Control Directorate (DECD). He also offered continued U.S. support to the enforcement and compliance effort, including help in arranging DHS/ICE investigative training for Israeli law enforcement newly charged with such duties. Building on a discussion of China in the smaller executive session that preceded the full JPMG, Mull asked whether the USG was seeing all the relevant exports under the new regulatory system. Pincu said he believed so and expressed confidence that it "is a good system." Replying to USG inquiries regarding the treatment of brokers under the new system, GOI representative Gideon Meretz noted that, while the law addresses brokering, its implementation remains pending and contingent on a final decision at senior levels in GOI Departments. The GOI expressed a desire to eliminate the need for providing detailed information on its licensing activities and export controls in future JPMG presentations, noting the ongoing DOD-led export control working group. Mull replied that State has a continuing interest in leading discussions on export controls and technology transfer issues, and that the preferred forum for such engagement should remain at the JPMG level.

#### Prospective Arms Transfers:

¶15. (C) Mull led the session on proposed weapons sales to the Middle East. He reiterated longstanding USG commitment to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge (QME), and outlined the decision to enhance the air and missile defense capabilities of the UAE through the proposed sale of THAAD, SL-AMRAAM and AVENGER systems. The sales were framed as a continuation of Secretary Gates' vision of a shared early warning network

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linking the Gulf countries to guard against current and future regional threats. The two sides reviewed the consultations for more than a year on various weapons systems proposed for sale under GSD, but the GOI was miffed it did

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not receive a non-paper as it had at the past two JPMGs. The U.S. side said it was moving away from such a non-paper because of the sensitivity of such discussions, but agreed to a meeting with State, OSD, and GOI Embassy representatives as soon as possible to review these matters. (NOTE: PM DAS Ruggiero led this meeting on March 28, which allowed both sides to discuss

the process and undertake a more in-depth review of specific arms transfers. END NOTE.)

#### Cluster Munitions:

¶16. (C) Mull and Buchris co-led the discussion on Cluster Munitions, which Buchris described as "our #1 issue." Mull noted new U.S. legislative constraints that prohibit the sale of cluster munitions with tested reliability rates below 99%.

Throughout the discussion, GOI representatives characterized this legislation as a severe problem for Israeli readiness and capability, especially if the legislation was applied to U.S.-owned cluster stockpiles pre-positioned in the event of a crisis. USG officials noted initial assessments that the current legislation would prevent the transfer of the pre-positioned munitions because they fail to meet the mandated reliability rate, but undertook to follow up with further consultations in the near future.

¶17. (S) GOI officials provided a thorough briefing on ongoing reform efforts following its use of cluster munitions during the summer 2006 conflict with Hizballah. They noted that these reform efforts accorded with the IDF's internal investigation and the Winograd Report, separately addressing: command and control; HQ directives on use; training and exercises; and updated documentation and manuals. In early February 2008, the GOI provided additional details to UNIFIL on cluster munitions related strike data, and continued working to prepare even more data to answer requests in the 1701 report. Mull pressed the Israelis to provide targeting data requested by UNIFIL. Both sides agreed to convene a joint cluster munitions working group in early May in Israel to further discuss reform efforts, cooperation within the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) to derail the Oslo Process, review and update as necessary of classified agreements on Israel's use of cluster munitions, and explore ways to cooperate on development of more reliable munitions.

#### Missile and Rocket Defense Cooperation:

¶18. (S) OSD/ISA's BG Rand updated the status on the Short Range Rocket Defense Working Group (SRRDWG). Rand pointed out that the working group was established pursuant to an Israeli request for USG assistance to counter the threat posed by frequent rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza. Rand previewed the upcoming second meeting of the SRRDWG in Tel Aviv on April 6-7. The meeting would seek to determine the way ahead on cooperation, assess progress, and refine the group's mission and objectives. GOI interest in selling the Arrow system to Turkey was discussed during the executive session, leading to GOI agreement on U.S. concerns and a GOI request to seek other opportunities for the U.S. and Israel to work cooperatively to engage Turkey and improve what they view as deteriorating internal situation.

#### Joint Security Assistance Planning:

¶19. (S) LTC Udi Evental presented a briefing on Israel's Joint Security Assistance Planning (JSAP) and its future outlook. Following the briefing, Mull and Buchris exchanged letters confirming the USG grant foreign military assistance levels of \$2.55 billion for FY2009, subject to Congressional approval. The USG letter, signed by AU/S Rood, also reiterated support for cooperative U.S.-Israeli programs and USG commitment to continue seeking funds for U.S. participation in selected joint research and development projects with Israel.

#### Participants:

State Department  
Stephen D. Mull, PM, Acting Assistant Secretary  
Frank Ruggiero, PM, Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Robert Danin, NEA, Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Lawrence Butler, NEA, Deputy Assistant Secretary  
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David Trimble, PM/DTC, Director Compliance  
Ian Kelly, EUR/RUS, Director  
Richard Sacks, SCA/PB, Director  
Timothy Wilder, SCA/RA  
Tim Watkins, PM/DTC, Compliance Officer  
Brooke Milton Kurtz, PM/RSAT, Section Chief  
Lt Col Reginald Robinson, PM/RSAT, Military Advisor

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Alan Davidson, Israel Desk Officer  
Ben Loewy, Defense Intelligence Agency

National Security Council  
Elliot Abrams, Deputy National Security Advisor  
Michael Pascual, Director Middle East North Africa

Defense Security Cooperative Agency  
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EUCOM  
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CAPT Kenneth Klothe

Defense Technology Security Administration  
Beth McCormick, Deputy Under-Secretary of Defense  
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LTC Kirk Dorr, J-3, Iraq Office

Missile Defense Agency  
LTC Douglas Pentecost  
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#### GOI Participants

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Mr Amos Gilad, Head of Political Military Bureau  
Mr. Amir Kain, Director, Directorate of Security of the  
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Mr. Yekutieli (Kuti) Mor, Director, Government of Israel  
Defense Mission  
Mr. Eli Pincu, Director, Defense Export Control Division  
Mr. Victor Mintz, Legal Advisor, Israel Defense Mission to  
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Mr. Gil Ffloris, Assistant to the Director General  
Mr. Danyshai Korenblot, Assistant Head of Political Military  
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Mr. Gideon Meretz, Legal Advisor  
Mr. Ahaz Ben Ari, Legal Advisor

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Mr. Jeremy Issacharoff, Deputy Chief of Mission Embassy of  
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Mr. Amir Maimon, Minister Consular Political Department  
MG Benjamin Gantz, Defense & Armed Forces Attache  
BG Shmaya Avieli, Air Force Attache  
Maj. Ofir Cohavi, Assistant to the Defense Attach,  
Mr. Nir Ben-Moshe, Director, Defense Cooperation Office  
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